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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for effective public elementary education are proposed by the American Federation of Teachers. The first recommendation concerns the expansion of early childhood education, including pre-kindergarten. Early childhood education should be characterized by small class groups, parent education and involvement, availability of a clinical team of professionals, carefully trained teachers and paraprofessionals, and separate housing facilities. The desirability of school integration is emphasized, with heterogeneous class groups based on sex, class, race, ethnicity, achievements, and adjustment suggested, Special school services to meet the dental, nutritional, medical, social, and emotional needs of children are encouraged. The importance of adequate funding for educational tools and supplies, and for the hiring of auxiliary assistants to release teachers from non-professional duties is discussed. Expanded cooperation between public school and local universities in staff training is proposed. Also noted are the importance of democratic staff involvement in decision-making policy, and the need for research by teachers and outside evaluative agencies. Finally, the cost of implementation of these guidelines is estimated at $450-600 per child, per year. It is argued that improved education will reduce the need for expensive corrective programs. (DP)

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★COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM FOR AMERICAN SCHOOLS

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A NATIONAL DESIGN FOR THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO

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FOREWORD

Almost as soon as the right to collective bargaining began to be won by teachers in the early 1960's, members of the American Federation of Teachers started to translate their conceptions of optimum teaching and learning conditions into the language of collective bargaining contracts.

The first such design was negotiated for a selected number of elementary schools in New York City in 1964. Similar programs were incorporated into union contracts in Cleveland, Baltimore, Yonkers, Chicago and Detroit and into legislation in California and Colorado.

The most famous of these programs was the More Effective Schools plan in New York. It provided for four teachers for every three classes; class size maximums of 22 (15 in kindergarten); increased supportive personnel, such as psychologists, psychiatrists, speech and hearing therapists; reading, art, drama and other specialists; more teacher aides, and greater teacher and parent involvement in administrative decision making in the school.

The More Effective Schools program was tested, retested and tested again. Such agencies as the Psychological Corporation and the American Institutes for Research found that it accelerated the learning rate of children, just as the teachers who designed it planned that it would, and the United States Office of Education chose it as "exemplary." Project READ in Chicago, the Neighborhood Education Centers in Detroit and other saturation programs showed similar successes.

The demand for similar designs at all levels of education—from pre-school to the community college—prompted the Executive Council of the AFT to establish the Council for a Comprehensive Program for American Schools (COMPAS), under the chairmanship of Simon Beagle, who headed the National Council for Effective Schools for many years and is a nationally known advocate of grassroots teacher involvement in educational design and decision making.

The work of the various COMPAS committees under Mr. Beagle's tutelage has resulted in four National Designs—for the elementary school, the middle school, the high school and the community college. The AFT is proud to present its Comprehensive Program for American Schools as its answer to those critics who believe that the way to solve the problems in education is somehow to tinker with the only relationship which results in learning—that between the teacher and the taught.

David Selden, President
American Federation of Teachers

INTRODUCTION

The crisis facing our school is nationwide. This crisis is both result and cause of a host of social ills. No one school district is immune.

This is tragic for our nation's children, their parents and for our country. If it is true, and we believe it to be so, that "our youth is our nation's most precious natural resource and our schools our first line of defense," then this crisis facing public education is as dangerous to each of us as any which may exist.

Our free public school system is the only social agency to which the vast majority of our multi-ethnic population is exposed. It is in our schools where we should provide opportunities for intellectual challenge, integrated relationships, and cultural and emotional enrichment.

In view of our economic wealth and our great reservoirs of knowledge, we as a nation are spending relatively less on our schools than many poorer countries. Too many of our schools lack the commitment and the means to fulfill their basic educational obligations. The gap is widening at a tragic pace because of current social changes.

A recent publication by the U.S. Office of Education titled "The Right to Read" (October 12, 1972) contains the following revealing statement:

"Even with its sophisticated communications methods and its advanced publications system, the U.S. has close to 19 million totally or functionally illiterate adults and 7 million elementary and secondary school students with severe reading problems. In large cities, between 40 and 50 percent of these children are underachieving in reading." This is an understatement. A previous evaluation report, also by the USOE, titled "Education of the Disadvantaged" (April, 1970), states that more than 17 million American children are educationally and/or economically deprived, a majority living in non-urban school districts. The report deplores the failure of fiscal authorities on all government levels to provide the funds needed to make possible lasting educational improvements.

The "Right to Read" lists the following basic guidelines, which of course the AFT considers most commendable and acceptable, but unattainable without the money needed to implement them.

- With the exception of 1 percent of the population considered uneducable, people can learn if programs are designed to meet their specific needs and strengths.
- Teachers and other educational personnel can adopt new ways if they are provided with methods which they are confident will aid them in working more effectively with their students.
- Intelligence is native to all ethnic and economic groups, and when expectations are equal, productivity will be basically equal as well.
- The necessary knowledge to solve the reading crisis is available. What remains is for that knowledge to be applied so that it will result in better teacher training, more effective educational programs, and the use of those new programs in classrooms and communities.
- Parents are concerned about their children's educational process

and have both the right and the responsibility to be involved in their education.

"The Right to Read effort spans all ages," says former U.S. Commissioner of Education Sidney P. Marland, Jr., "and intends to have a greater impact upon American society than merely helping people to achieve the minimal level of functional literacy. In itself that is a big goal, but it is not a complete one. For literacy means much more than being able to read a simple book. It is an avenue to greater social and economic opportunities, to deciding one's own destiny. It is a step toward reducing the unemployment rate, cutting down crime, and getting people off welfare. It is a step toward ensuring for each person the right to be his best self."

Few teachers or union members will disagree with these stated guidelines. In fact, there is a great deal of correspondence between them and the goals often stated by the American Federation of Teachers.

The AFT has stated on numerous occasions, "Too many of our children are growing up without the basic skills necessary for success as citizens. When these children are properly challenged and given the means for growth and learning, they can make satisfactory academic and social progress.

"When teachers are given the needed tools, services, and conditions to do a professional job, most respond positively, enthusiastically, and with a deep sense of personal commitment.

"The cost which may be necessary to obtain the needed educational improvements on a total schoolwide basis is minimal when compared to the costs which must be met resulting from containing, maintaining, and rehabilitating the growing number of our youth whom our schools are failing during their formative years."

However, mere expressions of distress or intent are not enough. Educationally sound and realistic guidelines must be formulated, proposed and implemented as a totality, first in areas of greatest needs, but eventually in all schools. We as a nation do this when we plan an updated national and state highway system. We can do no less for "our first line of defense" and for our "most valuable natural resource."

The American labor movement has always been a consistent defender of public education. The American Federation of Teachers is part of this movement and is also the organized expression of the classroom teachers on whom our nation must depend to educate its youth. Hence, the AFT must, of necessity, be involved in identifying the many specific problems facing our schools, in suggesting positive solutions, and in organizing campaigns to obtain the needed support for their implementation.

The following proposals are made to accomplish these objectives for our elementary schools. The AFT, through its Council for a Comprehensive Program for American Schools (COMPAS) is also preparing educational guidelines for middle schools, senior high schools, and community colleges. These efforts are part of its commitment to defend and improve public education.

In 1964, the AFT wrote, "The reconstruction of inadequate school systems throughout the country is an enormous job, too large for substantial solution on a local basis. It is essential that federal and state governments become involved." This observation is even more timely today than it was when first made.

The AFT program to reconstruct our elementary schools, we believe, can effectively reduce academic disabilities, educational frustration, delinquency and dropouts more than any investment in additional special services. The AFT proposes rapid annual expansion until there are no more substandard schools.

Simon Beagle, Chairman
COMPAS Council

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The need for effective comprehensive early childhood education is now generally accepted by the public. There is recognition of the crucial importance of the first eight years of a child's development. Many basic causes which may hinder or stimulate a child's development can be traced to his or her experiences, or lack of experiences and maturations during these first early years.

The emphasis during the Pre-Kindergarten and continuing through the second grade should focus on providing the stimuli and the tools permitting overall satisfying success. Unfortunately, there are too many kindergarten dropouts who, after an exciting and enthusiastic beginning, instead develop a pattern of continuing failure and frustration.

There is no one way to arrest this progression of failure. Many methods must be explored. What may succeed with one individual may be disastrous to another. However, there is enough known about how young children learn to formulate some basic educationally sound guidelines for an effective early childhood program which can meet the developmental needs of children as early as their second and/or third year.

The AFT recommends:

- A parent education program of training and involvement on all levels of an early childhood program (Pre-Kindergarten and continuing through the second grades).
- The organization of an early childhood program in a mini school within an elementary school, or as a seperate school in its own building or as an annex to an elementary school but housed elsewhere: rented space in a housing project, office building, or in available space in some other building not necessarily connected with the public school system.
- The organization of small class groups, carefully selected on a heterogeneous basis, with registers ranging from 15 to 20 in each class group. The class groups should reflect all segments of the community and varieties of experiences.
- The use of trained parent assistants and paraprofessionals.
- The availability of a clinical team consisting of a clinical psychologist, a social worker and a guidance counselor, one of whose responsibilities would be the identification of the needs and problems of atypical children.
- The use of carefully trained classroom teachers knowledgeable in the needs and problems facing the children in early childhood classes.
- A total program of activities allowing for a flexible use of personnel, equipment and auxiliary services to meet the needs of each child in the program: educational, psychological, social, medical, dental, nutritional.
- The creative democratic involvement of the total staff in all aspects of the program, including the administrators and supervisors, as a cooperating team concerned with the total needs and growth of each child in the program.

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SCHOOL SIZE

Large and overcrowded schools create conditions and problems which interfere with effective education. The social and educational pathologies resulting from such schools are too well known to need elaboration. Therefore the AFT recommends:

- The maximum register of elementary school should be no more than 800. Ideally, it should be no more than 500.
- School districts should find and create the needed space by studying the current utilization of existing space; by renting available space in office and other commercial buildings; by rehabilitating usable abandoned school space; by constructing temporary demountable school units; by organizing school annexes in public housing; by renting available space in buildings used by other public agencies.
- School districts, supported by city, state, and federal funds, must begin to construct the needed schools as this program is eventually expanded to all the schools in the district. Cooperation by all levels of governments will be necessary. If we can build safe and functional highways, we can also build safe and functional schools.

CLASS SIZE

Every child has a right to a dependent relationship with caring adults. Too many children have been deprived of this right because class sizes have been much too large. Limitation of class sizes is also essential in order to make individualization of instruction possible. The particular learning needs of children (as of others) can best be promoted in an educational environment which permits more personal attention from classroom teachers and from others concerned with the child's educational and related needs. The AFT recommends:

- Class size in the early childhood grades should be limited to 15.
- The maximum class size of regular classes above the early grades should be no more than 22.
- Special classes set up to meet the needs of children with exceptional disabilities should have lower maximum registers as may be determined by their special needs.

INTEGRATION

The AFT's program stresses that quality education and school integration are both necessary if we are to educate our nation's youth to live in and give support to an integrated society to which they are committed and in which they have a personal stake. *Such an integrated and pluralistic society does not mean the elimination of the values that can be derived from the sharing and the development of the contributions from the multi-ethnic groups in our nation.*

Therefore, the AFT recommends:

- The elimination of the track system.

- The organization of heterogeneous class groups based on sex, class, race, ethnicity, achievements, adjustment, etc.
- The training of staffs in the techniques and understandings needed to work effectively with such heterogeneous class groups.
- The creation and purchase of materials and texts furthering integration.
- The development of proper relationships with all groups in the school and in the community.
- The establishment of parent and community education programs.
- The creation and use of opportunities for inter- and intra-group involvement in the educational process.

The AFT recognizes that there are many local situations which make full racial, ethnic, or religious integration difficult because of the preponderance of a single class, ethnic, religious or racial group. Such situations exist in many areas in Washington, D. C., New York City, and in most large urban centers. However, there is enough evidence to indicate that quality schools, even if located in ghetto areas, will attract children from non-ghetto areas because of their quality.

SPECIAL SCHOOL SERVICES

Today a school is called upon to meet non-educational needs of children which formerly were met by the home or by the community. A child's medical, dental, nutritional, social and emotional needs are directly related to his school achievement. This is especially true for the many children who live in economically deprived areas and homes. The AFT recommends:

- Each school should have readily available medical, dental, and nutritional services for children who may need such.
- Each school should have adequate psychological, guidance and social work services available when and where such services are required. A clinical team consisting of a clinical psychologist, a guidance counselor and a social worker should be made available for each school with registers of 500 or more. Schools with registers below 500 can plan to share the services of such supportive clinical teams (perhaps one team for two schools).

EDUCATIONAL TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

Children and their teachers need a wide variety of educational texts, material and equipment. School districts must provide a budget for each school to permit it to obtain such needed educational tools and equipment readily, without delay, when needed by the school staff. The AFT recommends:

- The overall needs of the school and its components should be budgeted in advance for the entire school year.
- Each school should be allowed a special contingency fund based on school registration and its special programs to allow it to meet its own special needs without undue delay.
- Teachers should be encouraged by providing a class "kitty fund" to develop new and creative instructional material and programs.
- A non-complicated but effective accounting system should be set up for each school under the direction of a staff member knowledgeable about accounting procedures.

AUXILIARY ASSISTANTS

Schools, like hospitals do now, must free their professional staffs from time and energy-consuming chores which can best be performed by non-professionals. In order to permit our educators, especially the classroom teachers, to meet their professional responsibilities, the AFT recommends:

- The employment of a sufficient number of school auxiliaries (teacher aides) to perform those duties which now are being performed by the professional staff, e.g., patrols, collection of funds, delivery of supplies, care and delivery of special equipment, care of bulletin boards,

record keeping, and such other non-teaching duties which now consume the time and energy of the professional staff.

- The development of guidelines which would protect the rights of such school aides while making effective use of them.

STAFF TRAINING

There is general recognition that effective teacher training programs are most important for effective education. This is especially true for staffs in those schools which may be selected to begin implementation of such programs as suggested by the AFT. The AFT recommends:

- Discussions be held between the school district and the nearby colleges and universities which train the major segments of the district's school staff to formulate realistic teacher pre-service education programs.
- The selected schools become educational laboratories for such colleges and universities with possibilities for training programs for teachers during the school day and after school hours.
- The selected schools become teacher resource and teacher training centers with carefully planned cooperation between schools of education and the school district.
- A staff exchange program to be planned and implemented between the selected schools and the schools of education in each of the cooperating colleges and universities.
- The cooperation and involvement of the State Department of Education be sought.
- Time and resources be scheduled for all involved in such staff training programs.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

No one discipline or professional group has a monopoly of wisdom or all the needed skills even in its own special area. Education is no exception. The need for continuing research is important and so is the need for timely well-conducted evaluation of educational experimentation and programs resulting from such research. This is, of course, also true of existing educational programs. Of paramount importance is the involvement of the actual practitioners, the classroom teachers, in such research and evaluation. The AFT recommends:

- Classroom teachers must be provided the time, resources and special assistance to carry on their own research; experimentation with innovative use of techniques, material, curriculum content; cooperative evaluation of the results of their research and experimentation; and corrective modifications as they may be suggested by the findings from such evaluation.
- Provide for an evaluation of the total school program by an accredited outside evaluative agency with the school staff involved in the process.
- Implement those corrective recommendations pertinent to staff and the schools.

DEMOCRATIC STAFF INVOLVEMENT

It is essential that the school staff, especially the classroom teachers, be genuinely involved in determining school policy, and in the implementation of such policy as may concern them. Such involvement will make for effective cooperation, coordination and implementation by a concerned understanding staff—to the advantage of the children. The AFT recommends:

- Teachers, individually and collectively through their chosen representative, should have opportunities to consult with the school administration and be involved in decision-making policies.
- Time must be scheduled for such discussions, consultations and classroom preparation.
- There should be enough personnel to allow each classroom teacher to meet with colleagues, parents, students, community leaders, supportive services, etc. without depriving children of instructional time.
- Each staff member should be scheduled a daily preparation period to make this possible.

COST

It is estimated that $450-$600 more per child per year can make it possible for a school to implement a program based on AFT suggested guidelines provided space is available. The difference in cost may result from variations in cost factors in the different communities.

It costs an average community about $6,000 per year to contain a wrong-doer in a detention center when youngsters get into "trouble." It costs $6,000-$8,000 per student per year in a job-training program for dropouts. How much does it cost society to maintain our growing numbers of unemployables (poorly educated youths) on welfare? How much does it cost society to fight drug addiction? (Most drug addicts come from the ranks of the poorly educated.) Even if the program helped only 25 percent of the students who, without such programs, would join the ranks of the dropouts and unemployables, society would more than recoup what it may spend for effective education. As Prof. Alan Campbell so well stated in his report to the California School Boards Association (July 1966), "Piecemeal, part-time efforts by school districts to improve the lot of educationally disadvantaged children are wasteful and virtually useless."

The cost for AFT programs is really minimal when compared to the cost to taxpayers for providing the funds needed to pay for the social and economic consequences resulting from our failure to provide for effective education.

SUMMARY

Pupils and Curriculum

- Integration should be a major factor in the choice of schools.
- The program should provide for education beginning at ages 3-4.
- The school should be open from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. with programs to meet the needs of the pupils.
- Class size should vary from 15 in prekindergarten classes to a maximum of 22 in other grades.
- Classes should include children with a wide range of abilities and personality traits, heterogeneously grouped. Individualized instruction in the 3 Rs should be provided through flexible grouping within such class or grade.
- Promising modern teaching methods should be implemented under optimum conditions. These should include team teaching, and non-graded blocs consisting of early childhood grades, grades 3-4 and 5-6.
- Abundant supplies of modern teaching materials appropriate to urban communities should be made available.
- Provision should be made to meet the needs of children with physical, emotional, and social problems through a teacher, guidance and medical team and other needed services.
- Efforts should be made to overcome the effects of pupil and family mobility through closer cooperation with the Department of Housing, the Department of Welfare, and other social agencies. In addition, adjustments should be made in present transfer regulations to encourage pupils to remain in their schools.
- Close relations should be established with local colleges and universities for purposes of teacher training, curriculum development, research, and evaluation and project development. The schools and the

local colleges and universities should become extensions of each other.

- Maximum use should be made of the newest techniques in audio-visual instruction including closed circuit TV.
- Teacher specialists in art, music, and other curriculum areas should be used to enrich the instructional program.

Personnel

- Efforts should be made to recruit a staff which is enthusiastic, able, and committed to the program. This can be achieved through the democratic involvement of teachers and supervisors.
- Provisions should be made for a continuous program of professional growth including payment by the Board of Education for time spent after school hours.
- In order to give teachers maximum time for concentration on instruction, teachers should receive a daily unassigned preparation period, and relief from all non-teaching duties.

School Plan and Organization

- Maximum use of the school plant should be made for a full school day, weekend and during the summer months.
- Needed space and facilities should be sought in office buildings, housing projects, storefronts, etc.
- New schools should be located to achieve maximum integration.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This national design for the elementary school is devised to meet today's educational needs of the schools. Hopefully, the additional space, trained staff, and the budgetary resources needed to implement the design's basic guidelines will create opportunities for creative thinking and experimentation with new and modified teaching and supervisory practices; for improved school and community relationships; for new and creative use of teaching materials; for creative and effective use of personnel; for a new look at our children, their needs, and their potential for learning; and for a study and evaluation of the teaching and learning processes.

The AFT does not offer the suggested design as the final and only solution to the many problems facing our elementary schools. Improvements are open-ended. No one group or one discipline is today in a position to propose final solutions. The joint effort of many related groups and related disciplines are necessary. However, since the AFT's major responsibility is to advance the cause of public education, it must continue to meet this responsibility in an active, intelligent, and forceful manner. The educational needs of our nation mandates others to join this effort.

Simon Beagle, Chairman
COMPAS Council

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION

Careful evaluation of the program as a whole from the very initiation of the program is basic to sound growth. The evaluation must be skillfully planned under the guidance of the research staff assigned and in cooperation with the school staff and trained college personnel. All resources of the Board of Education, colleges and universities, public agencies and private grants should be used to design and conduct research.

In order to effectuate the research program, one school should be designated as the Research Center. It should have as consultant an "Academy of Research" composed of outstanding experts and specialists from the entire metropolitan community. The Research Center would serve as a clearing house for studies, explorations of new procedures and materials, and so on, and would work in close cooperation with the departments of educational research, curriculum research and child guidance.

Areas of action in research with experimentation would include the following:

Organization and special classes

- Nongraded primary
- Grade unit
- Team Teaching
- Open-end grouping
- Prekindergarten
- Extended day in kindergarten
- "Bridge" classes

Involvement with groups

- Campus school program
- Special community projects
- School-community aides
- Civic agencies (health, housing, welfare)
- Human-relations groups

Special programs

- Camping programs (summer, sleep-away, year-round)
- Summer day camp program
- Extended school day program
- Community library program
- Special parent-community programs
- Welcome program (new arrivals, orientation)
- Summer kindergarten programs
- Exchange school program (teachers, parents, children)
- Audio-visual: closed-circuit television
- Audio-visual: listening-speaking laboratories

Studies and projects

Approaches to teaching non-English children
Study of approaches to beginning reading
Study of physical anomalies and the results of a correction program (with AMA)
Studies of academic achievement in selected areas
Studies of sequences in learning
Studies of effectiveness in different patterns of preservice and in-service growth
Studies of the use of programmed materials and machines in motivating learning
Studies of utilization of community resources
Studies relating to motivation, human relations, the effectiveness of guidance, etc.

Although each of these areas of investigation has broad implications for the whole school system, nevertheless the focus imperative here is on the values pertinent to the children in the suggested program.

APPENDIX B

OTHER FACTORS

Staff Growth

The catalytic agent in moving forward any program is the staff assigned to bring into action the suggestions culled from every source. In addition to the suggestions given in the section on Personnel, the following avenues of staff growth should be emphasized:

Professional Library Each school in the program should have a professional library appropriate to the size of the staff and the diversity of their problems.

Foreign Language Each school should provide opportunity on an optional, voluntary basis, for staff members to learn the language spoken by many children in the school (Italian, Spanish, French, and so on).

Operation Understanding Members of the staff should have the opportunity to participate in a program similar to New York's "Operation Understanding" (the program of supervisor visitation and teacher exchange with schools in Puerto Rico). Such a program could also be extended to sections of our own country, as the South, and to other countries.

Research Clearing House Provision must be made on a planned, systematic basis relaying to members of the staff all significant findings that emerge from studies and investigations. This relay should include not only written reports but practical demonstrations and, where pertinent, actual practice in using the findings.

In essence, time and resources must be provided for a carefully developed program of staff growth that not only will give every participating teacher and supervisor the information needed for more effective performance of his responsibilities, but also will challenge his professional interest.

If we accept the broad definition of the curriculum as all the experience the child has inside and outside the school, then this AFT National Design for the Elementary School is an appropriate vehicle for fulfilling this objective.